THE ROMANCE OF MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORY

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THE ROMANCE OF MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORY

We may as well acknowledge that only the few read history as a recreation. To the world at large, the picture of the Past will always be dim, save as illumined bythe masters of romance. Their presentation is often false in portraiture, incident, perspective-facts being more or less distorted to suit the whim of the artist; but, although lacking in accuracy, their tableaux are popularly accepted as true, and so vividly painted are they that historians seek in vain to correct them.

The history that lives in our memory, that permanently appeals to our imagination, is in large degree the history portrayed by our novelists and poets. Scotland lives for us in that region of fancy depicted by Burns, the Waverly Novels, and "Kidnapped." Ireland would practically be unknown save for Lever, Moore, and Lover. England will ever be the stage whereon walk the characters of Shakespeare, Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer-Lytton, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. Our France is the land of Dumas, Hugo, Balzac, and Zola.

It is the fashion for most historians, devotees as they are of scientific exactness, to decry this tendency of the masses to take their chronicles in the sugar-coated form; they declare that history warped to the purposes of romance is worse

than no history at all. But I, for one, am somewhat inclined to differ with my sober-minded colleagues. I see great value in romance as a hand-maiden of history-provided always that the romancer be honest, and adept at his craft. If forsooth John and Mary take not kindly to the history of the historians, then am I quite content that history should serve as a framework for the romance that they will accept. Historians there are, such as Motley, Prescott, Parlanan, Gibbon, Macaulay, Guizot, who with lofty imagination and consummate art reconstruct the stage of history, re-dress and re-people it, so that one may contemplate as through an open window the pageant of the Past. The clientele of chroniclers such as these, is wider than the circle of admiring friends who applaud the thesis of the latest candidate for the doctor's hood. Yet after all, men and women who know well even their Gibbon and their Parlanan, constitute a small fraction only of that restricted group of human beings whom we dub '"cultured.'" To the multitude, the '"Rise and Fall" either of Rome or of New France is and ever will be caviare.

If then we would have awakened in the mind of the man of the street and of the club an intelligent appreciation of the impressive lessons taught by the world's experience, let us welcome right heartily good historical romance, and patriotic verse that has the proper ring. The novelist and the poet being the real teachers of history to the masses, we must needs seek to instruct these inspired interpreters, to direct them to the salient points in our nation's annals, and

be exceeding glad that they have the God-given faculty of attractively clothing our dry bones of facts with flesh and blood, and of so endowing them with the breath of life that they walk freely in the market place.

In the field of American history, the romantic period of Colonial and Revolutionary life has of late years attracted the attention of many poets and novelists, some of whom reveal genuine powder; their works have been eagerly read by hundreds of thousands to whom history as history possesses few charms. The undoubted result has been a general quickening of patriotism, a stirring of the national consciousness. Much of the Atlantic sea-board has now become recognized as a storied land. A steady throng of pilgrims dwells with enthusiasm on scenes associated with the doughty heroes of historical fiction, and incidentally worships at real historic shrines.

The vast plains of the trans-Missonri, the Rocky Mountains, and to some extent their western slopes, have also found their singers and their tellers of folk-tales. Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, and a score of imitators and successors, have made this a region of romance, with whose life and features we, through their eyes, are all of us familiar. But, with a few notable exceptions that will readily occur to you, the history of the great valley of the Mississippi has been neglected by those who practice the arts of fiction.

Records of sales of Middle Western books seem to warrant the conclusion that Americans at large believe the story of our great valley to be of slight significance: that, like '"Topsy," the trans-Allegheny simply "growed"-developed in a prosaic sort of way, chiefly as the result of physical pressure from the East for a wider field of activity; that the killing of the Indians, the hewing of the forests, the breaking of lands, and the vulgar commonplaces of the rude frontier as set forth in Dickens's *Notes and Mrs. Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans* constitute the entire tale; that the Middle West has become interesting to civilized men only since it has taken on the prosperity and manners of the East.

This is a popular delusion. In truth, no section of our land has a tale of higher import or better worth the telling. There is much yet to do on the part of historians of the Middle West towards the popularizing of their theme. So busy have they been, mining crude ore in new veins constantly opening to their view, that they have not adequately minted their precious metal into the coin of literary commerce.

At the golden jubilee of this still young and ambitious association, which upholds the torch of history here upon the sweeping prairies of our Middle West, other participants in the programme have discussed or are to discuss certain social, economic and political aspects of its past. It seems fitting, therefore, that we devote at least one brief hour to some consideration of

the romantic side of its annals, the phase that must and will be insisted upon if Western history is to pass current with the multitude.

The giant stage of our drama is most picturesquely set. The Mississippi majestically sweeps through its valley from well nigh the sub-arctic to the sub-tropic, with broad, winding affluents to left and right, whose headsprings lie afar in the Appalachians and the Rockies, the lofty rims of this monster basin. Its northern reaches are closely approached by the mighty drainage trough of the east-flowing St. Lawrence; and easy portage paths between the two systems have been followed by man from the earliest historic times. Across the Appalachians, also, communication is facilitated by convenient carries between the headwaters of the Atlantic rivers and those of the West. To the far north, a vast net-work of lakes and divergent streams leads deviously to the Arctic Ocean; while adventurers early penetrated to the Pacific, overland from the Missouri and the far-stretching systems of the Saskatchewan and the Assiniboin.

The first actors on this arena were the most interesting and picturesque barbarians ever encountered by ciivilized man. Of several linguistic groups, representing hundreds of contestant tribes, they varied widely in physiognomy, speech, habits, and costume, as well as in stages of culture, but nearly all were hunters and warriors of no mean capacity. Wandering hither and yon in the elusive search for food,

which in forest or stream often led them far afield, they nevertheless were quick to resent any trespass on their own domain; so that inter-tribal warfare was frequent, and the political map of the region as shifting as patterns in a kaleidoscope.

At the time of the European discovery, life among the American Indians was in large measure an alternation between hunting and being hunted, between hours of feast and weeks of famine. They were rational humans, in the child stage of development; friendship and strife and joy and sorrow were theirs as well as ours; virtue had its rewards, and vice met with much the same penalties as with us; success or failure was open to each individual, for the village was a pure democracy; there were believers in miracles, and those who scoffed at them; good men and bad, and cowards and brave; heroes and heroines there were, in every walk of life; among them, love wrought both blessing and sorrow, and there was marrying and giving in marriage. It was not exactly the idyllic existence portrayed in the "Leatherstocking Tales," any more than our own work-a-day world is a continuous round of melodrama. Cooper, who set the pace for a thousand imitators, might have wrought more truly had he understood his aborigines as thoroughly as does the modern ethnologist. Worthy novels of real life among the Red Indians are yet to come; the grain is abundant, but not until now has the harvest been prepared.

The advent of the Spanish explorers in our valley was meteoric in its brilliancy, and their departure almost as sudden. The conquest of Mexico by Cortez had made that hardy adventurer the hero of Christendom, and others sought to rival his splendid achievements. The distressing adventures of Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions, who for eight years wandered through deserts and forests and hostile tribes, while crossing the continent from Florida to the Gulf of California; and the long and fruitless quest among the adobe pueblos of the Southwest for the fabled "seven golden cities of Cibola," culminating in Coronado's romantic expedition, perhaps the most remarkable of modern times-these are hero tales illuminating our annals, and awaiting the glamor of artistic fiction to become widely known of men.

He who seeks rich color, will doubtless find the French regime the most entertaining epoch of Mississippi Valley history. Entrenched with apparent security on the rock of Quebec, New France early dispatched her explorers up the majestic trough of the St. Lawrence. With rare enterprise and bravery they gradually pushed their way up toilsome rivers, along westering portage paths, and far over into the vast-stretching wilderness of the continental interior.

Where are there finer examples of dramatic adventure than the great journey of Nicolet, sent by Champlain into Darkest America to discover a short route to China? Donning his

diplomatic garb of figured damask to meet supposititious mandarins, lie encountered only naked Winnebago savages on the inland waters of Wisconsin. What more stirring incident in history than the famous expedition of Jolliet and Marquette to discover the far-away Mississippi, as in stately curves it glided past eroded bluffs and through sombre forests toward the Southern Gulf? or, the fur-trading quests of those masterful adventurers, Radisson, La Salle, Tonty, Perrot, Du I'Hut, and a host of kindred spirits? Is there anywhere a nobler instance of self-sacrifice than the splendid martyrdom of the Jesuit missionaries, who, imbued with the zeal of mediaeval saints for the faith that was in them, often suffered the horrors of the damned?

Establishing themselves, as well, on the Gulf of Mexico, the French sought to connect Louisiana with Canada bymeans of a thin line of forts along the interlacing waterways of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes. Traders, soldiers, missionaries, professional explorers, and political agents, in due time threaded every important stream in the two great continental drainage systems. The Bourbon "sphere of influence" with the barbarian tribes extended from Athabasca to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Black Hills to Cape Breton. It is not surprising that with this advantage they should confidently have hoped to hem Englishmen in to the narrow slope of the Atlantic hills, and ultimately to drive them into the sea.

Many a picturesque account of life at the St. Lawrence forts of New France is to be found in the pages of the historian Parkman, and in the novels of William McLennan, Gilbert Parker, and Mary Hartwell Catherwood. We know of the annual trading fleets of canoes and batteaux from the far distant regions of the Upper Lakes and the Mississippi, journeying over a thousand miles to barter rich furs for colored beads and glittering trinkets fashioned in Brittany and Paris. Piled high with bales of peltries, and propelled by gaily-appareled savages and *voyageurs*, with black-robed priests for passengers, the flotillas swept down the broad rivers in rude procession, paddles flashing in the sun, the air rent with barbaric yells and the roaring quaver of merry boating songs. We can hear and see the boisterous welcome from the garrisons of Lower Canada; the succeeding weeks of barter and mad carousal on the strand of Quebec or of Montreal; and then the return of the copper-skinned visitors to the "Upper Country," tricked out in gaudy finery, bearing into the wilderness fresh stores of gew-gaws, and accompanied by another contingent of traders and explorers-often, also, by Jesuit missionaries bent on showing them, even against their will, the path to the White man's Manitou.

Away off in the then mysterious land of the Far West, were insignificant military outposts, bulwarks of the authority of New France-Detroit, Mackinac, Green Bay, Chequamegon Bay, Vinceimes; and, ranged along the Mississippi, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Chartres, and many

another rude bankside fort or stockade, all the way from Lake Pepin to Natchez.

Around each of these little forest strongholds-of logs or of stone, as materials came best to hand-was clustered a tiny hamlet of *habitants*: boatmen, tillers of the soil, mechanics, according to bent or to necessity. At the head of society in this rude settlement was the military commandant-sometimes a worthy scion of the petty nobility, but too often, especially in the later decades, a dishonest braggart, living like most of the officials of New France, upon blackmail and thievery.

Next in social precedence was the Jesuit Father, whose scanty chapel lay just within the gate; he, too, perhaps of noble birth and training, inevitably a scholar, but bound by unalterable vows to a life of toilsome self-sacrifice for the winning of savage souls in these inhospitable wilds. Ever was he coming and going upon long and wearisome journeys among the tribes, his life frequently embittered by the jealousy of the commandant.

Visiting the frontier fort were always wandering traders, each at the head of a band of rollicking *voyageurs*, jauntily clad in fringed buckskins and showy caps and scarfs, with a semi-savage display of bracelets, dangling earrings, and necklaces of beads. The *coureur de bois*, or unlicensed trader-a career involving considerable risk, because defying the fur-trade monopoly of New France-accompanied by a

sprightly party of devil-may-care retainers, was not an infrequent caller, upon unlieralded expeditions here and there through the dark woodlands and along sparkling waters. He was in his day the most daritig spirit and the widest traveller in North America.

Freely mingling with this varied and variegated company were bands of half-naked, long-haired savages and half-breeds, glistening with oils, and tricked out with paint and feathers. For the most part the boon companions of the French, now and then would they smite their White allies with cruel treachery, suddenly converting into a charnel-house many a self-confident outpost of the far-stretching realm of the great Louis.

Upon this inviting amphitheatre of New France, we find a heterogeneous feudal society, with feudal manners and customs, and a never-ending variety of connections with the OldWorld-social, political, and mercantile complications being multiplied by the adventurous and diversified aims and pursuits of the colonists, scattered as they were through thousands of miles of savage wilderness.

We have also here an economic and social study of the most fascinating character- on the one hand, a partial adjustment of the tribesmen to the ways of the Whites, their complete conversion from a semi-agricultural people to nomadic hunters of fur for the French traders, their absorption of the worst vices of Europe

at the same time that many abandoned nature-worship to become devotees of Christianity; on the other hand, the adaptation of the most polished of Europeans to the conditions of the wilderness, even to fraternizing and intermarrying with the savages, implicating themselves in the internecine feuds of the forest, and at times adopting the dress and methods of their barbaric allies, while conducting a partisan warfare against the borderers of the English colonies. Nobles and peasants, priests and adventurers, soldiers, merchants, artisans, and fishermen, nuns and fine ladies, all mingled freely in this thrilling tragedy of the old regime. The air quivered with the whisperings of dark intrigue; men and women in rich laces, aping the rotten court at Versailles, played with lives, fortunes, honor, as with dice; the King's favorites, civil and military, from Governor down to wilderness factor, robbed His Majesty's subjects as jauntily as an old-time hero of the English highway relieved my lord bishop of his purse.

Amid much that was sordid and dishonorable- yet undeniably picturesque, as became the age and the people and the free-and-easy frontier conditions under which they lived, and the sad example set them by their exalted highnesses at home- we find an unaffected charm of manner, a flavor of honest chivalry, and such a wealth of stirring incident and unselfish loyalty to duty, as in the recital sets the heart afire.

At last, one fateful summer, the men of the hamlets and wilderness stations, seigneurs and

tenants, traders and *voyageurs*, commandants and soldiery, were summoned by Indian runners to hasten to the Lower St. Lawrence, to free New France from the English invaders, whose very existence was to not a few of these forest exiles practically unknown. On the Plains of Abraham many a brave fellow from the Upper Lakes and the Mississippi Valley gave up his life for the fleur de lis. But all was in vain, for the time had come to ring down the curtain on this gallant drama. New France was no more.

The English, however, won only that portion of the great valley lying eastward of the river; upon Spain, France by secret treaty bestowed New Orleans and the trans-Mississippi. English explorers, fur-traders, and settlers from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas had for a full century trespassed on French preserves to the west of the Appalachians, and tampered with the Indian allies of the Bourbons. The temerity of these fearless over-mountain adventurers directly incited the French and Indian War, which had resulted in the dovnifall of New France. King George now sought in a single proclamation to please the Indians, to cultivate the fur-trade, and to check the dangerous growth of his restless coast colonists, by forbidding them save by royal permission to settle on lands to the west of the mountains. The injunction was idle; the expansion of the English colonies in America proved irresistible. The Great West was theirs, and they proceeded in due course to occupy it.

Contemporaneously with the uprising of the American colonies, began a great transmontane irruption of buckskin-clad borderers from the Atlantic uplands into Kentucky, whither Finley, Boone, the Long Hunters, and their several predecessors, had led the way. This Arcadia of forests and glades and winding streams and incomparable game was won from savagery only after long years of sturdy warfare. The story of that winning is filled to the brim with picturesque and tragic incidents. Cherokee, Catawba, and Shawnee, moved to vengeance by persistent pressure upon their hunting grounds, fought after their own wild standards and fought well, for what they held most dear; they would have been cravens, not to have made a stand. The White man, pouring his ceaseless caravans through Cumberland Gap and down the broad current of the Ohio, brooked no opposition from an inferior race, for White man's might makes right, and struck back with a fury often augmented by fear. Such is the blood-stained story of our method of conquering the wilderness.

To save Kentucky from the northern Indians, who were being egged on by the British, and who used the forts of King George as rallying points for devastating forays against American backwoodsmen, George Rogers Clark, at the head of that now famous band of Virginia frontiersmen, many of whom were garbed in an airy costmne combining that of the Highlander with that of the savage, undertook his hazardous but successful expedition against Kas-

kaskia and Vincennes; an event abounding in dramatic scenes that will doubtless live long in American story.

Kentucky having at last quieted the aborigine by crushing him, now entered upon a period of relative prosperity. Down the swift-rolling Ohio, through several decades descended a curious medley of oar- and sail-driven craft, made in the boat-yards of the Allegheny, Youghiogheny, and Monongahela- rafts, arks, flat- and keel-boats, barges, pirogues, and schooners of every design conceivable to fertile brain. These singular vessels bore emigrants eager to found new commonwealths in the bounding West. Hailing from all parts of the Eastern States and many countries of Europe, they came with their women and children, their bundles, their tools, and their cattle- lusty, pushing folk, suffering on the way and in the early years of their settlement privations seldom if ever surpassed among the tales of the border.

And now Kentucky's crops were larger than her population could consume. She needed to convey them to the markets of the world, to barter them for the goods and products of other communities. But Spain held firm control of the mouth of the Mississippi, and of the rich lands beyond the river, upon which our Westerners were beginning to look with hungry eyes. The federal authorities of that day were slow to realize that the free navigation of the Mississippi was essential to the development of the West. Consequently there was much discontent

among the leaders of Kentucky, fomented first by Spanish intrigues, and next by French- for France was at last beginning to display some jealousy of the young republic whom she had assisted into life, and apparentlywould fain have unofficially rejoiced both in Western secession and in the utilization of the trans-Alleghenians in filibustering expeditions against Spanish Louisiana. Through twenty years of its formative period the West was thus in a state of secret ferment, the full story of which is even yet unrevealed, but gradually is being brought into the light, fit material for historical romance.

Spain, fearing an assault upon her possessions from British Canada, made flattering offers of land grants to those American pioneers who should colonize her territory and cast their fortunes with her people. Many discontented Kentuckians accepted these terms and moved on to Missouri- among them the wandering Boones, who were already sighing for '"more elbow room," and glad to be rid of the crowds, to get new and cheap lands, to avoid taxes, to hunt big game, and once more to live an Arcadian life. I love to picture the great Daniel, transplanted in his old age to these fresh wilds beyond the great river, seated at the door of his little log cabin on Femme Osage Creek, dispensing justice as a Spanish syndic, by methods as primitive and arbitrary as those of an Oriental pasha. Caring little for rules of evidence as laid down in the books, saying he but wished to know the truth, the once mighty hunter oftentimes com-

pelled both parties to a suit to divide the costs between them and begone.

The brief term of the Spanish occupation of Louisiana was in itself rich in picturesque incident. The sparse population in New Orleans and in isolated hamlets clinging closely to the western banks of the Mississippi, was almost wholly French, although in the main officered by Spaniards, who sought somewhat cumbrously to graft a semblance of Spanish law and political machinery upon French ideas and the *coutume de Paris*. George Rogers Clark was much assisted by French-Canadian sympathy and not a little by the officials of Spain; and in the South, our Revolution was strengthened by Spanish expeditions against the British in Florida. But with the coming of peace, it soon became evident that, as her price for these courtesies, Spain aimed at getting Illinois and a large slice of the country lying to the back of the Alleghenies and abutting on the east bank of the Mississippi. The firmness of the American peace commissioners alone warded off these pretensions, and left the Mississippi as the western boundary of the United States. Five years before the century closed, Spain was induced by treaty to open the river to free navigation by Americans.

By now, an incipient American empire had become established in the trans-Allegheny. Settlement had advanced slowly down the great eastern affluents of the Mississippi, as along the fingers of the hand- the broad and rich valley bottoms being occupied by a crude but hard-

headed border folk, although the intervening highlands were as yet left untouched, save as farmer-hunters here roved for game to stock their larders.

In the trans-Mississippi, there was also growth, although relatively small. The fur trade prospered, with St. Louis as its chief entrepot; on the eastern side, Kaskaskia was a like emporium. Itinerant merchants, usually French, pushed their way to the upper waters of the Mississippi and its northern tributaries, also into the southwest towards the Spanish commercial centre of Santa Fé. By the close of the century French traders had reached the Mandan villages at the great bend of the Missouri, where they came in contact with the agents of British fur-trade companies, who had journeyed thither from their fortified posts on the Assiniboin and the Saskatchewan.

The great Napoleon had meanwhile risen to power. Reflecting upon the tragic story of the ousting of France from North America, he deemed it possible to rehabilitate New France to the west of the Mississippi, thus not only bringing credit to the mother-land, but checking the United States in its westward growth. Spain was therefore coerced into retroceding Louisiana to its original European owner.

There now came to pass another fateful move upon the political chess-board. Three years later- a war with Great Britain pending, fearful that his arch enemy might seize this new

possession, needing money to replenish his treasury, and at the same time thinking to checlanate Englandby allowing her growing American rival to expand its bounds- Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States, lacking but a year of two centuries after the first successful settlement of the French in Canada. It was but yesterday that with joyous acclaim we celebrated the hundredth anniversary of this epoch-making Purchase that has helped to make us one of the mightiest nations of the earth. The history of the transaction is today as household words.

But even had not the Louisiana Purchase been made just when it was, American acquisition of the trans-Mississippi was sure to have come. A river is no adequate boundary between nations, if on one bank be a people feverish to cross, and on the other a lethargic folk. The Valleyitself, is a geographical unit. Tens of thousands of Americans had by this time descended the eastern slope of the basin, and many had not even waited by the river side for a change in the political ownership of the western. We have seen Kentuckians before the Purchase, on Spanish lands along the lower reaches of the Missouri. The chief increase of Upper Louisiana had in recent years been caused by American borderers. They had settled on French lands near New Orleans; and there was a dense American centre at Natchez. The great Purchase only hastened and facilitated our national progress.

The ever-fascinating and thrilling tale of Lewis and Clark, as under Jefferson's masterly direction they broke the path for American civilization all the long rugged way from the mouth of the Missouri to the estuary of the Columbia, is still ringing afresh in our ears- embellished with new details, but recently brought to view, that make still more brilliant this glowing page in our Valley's history.

While still the great expedition was upon its route, other official explorers were searching the valleys of the Red, the Arkansas, and the Republican, reaching out to Spanish New Mexico, and pushing on over the rich grazing plains of Nebraska and Kansas to the snow-capped peaks of the eastern Rockies. The goldenage of American exploration through the newly-acquired Territory of Louisiana, forms a splendid chapter in the annals of our race. The names of Pike, Long, Fremont, Carson, recall many a rare adventure in the cause of science. The records of the great rival fur-trading companies operating in the trans-Mississippi, with their picturesque annual caravans over the Santa Fé and Oregon trails, and the stories of roving bands of trappers and scouts who in following the buffalo discovered mountain passes that are today highways of the world's commerce, furnish thrilling scenes to grace the pages of a thousand romances.

In due time, the narrow paths of fur-traders, trappers, and explorers were broadened by emigrants, who throughout the nation's history have ever crowded toward our Farthest West. The

great migration to Oregon, in the forties of the last century, was an event of supreme significance. Bold and restless pioneers, heavily armed, set forth from the older settlements in wagons and on foot, with their women and children, with herds of cattle and horses, and after slowly traversing the broad plains, painfully crept over the mountain barrier and spread themselves into the verdant valleys of the Willamette and the Columbia.

Soon came the news that gold was discovered in California. Then followed another mighty westward rush over the transcontinental trails- within three years, a hundred thousand men and women from both hemispheres crossed the Mississippi in their mad struggle to reach the El Dorado of Pacific tidewater. Ten years later, the Colorado hills also revealed the story of their hidden wealth. Up the long valleys of the Platte, the Smoky Hill, and the Arkansas, singly and in caravans, wearily toiled tens of thousands from all the corners of the earth, many falling by the way from fatigue, starvation, and the wounds of Indian arrows; jet their experience in no wise checking the hmnan tide that had set in the direction of the everlasting hills.

Overland stages and “prairie schooners” were quickly withdrawn upon the advance of the Pacific railways. The buffalo and grizzly soon disappeared from our Western plains. The Indian, stoutly standing for his birthright, was subdued at last. The cow-boy succeeded the explorer and the trapper. Upon our great

rivers, the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the Missouri, the introduction of steamboats, and later the bankside railways, wrought a like transformation. The old river life with its picturesque but rowdy boatmen, its unwieldy produce-laden flats and keels and arks, began to pass away, and water traffic to approach the prosaic stage.

Prosaic, perhaps, because near to our present vision. In this progressive land, however, we are ever living in a period of transition. For example, now that the great northern forests in our Valley have been nearly obliterated, and the day of the lumber raft is for us fast fading, and the '"lumber jack" in his particolored Mackinac blouse is about shifting his career to new fields of activity in the South and the Far Northwest, we can realize that he too has been a striking figure on our stage- worthy of a place beside the *coureur de hois*, *the voyageur*, *the habitant*, the buckskin-clad Scotch-Irislnnan of the Wilderness Trail, the flat-boat man, the scout of the plains, the Rocky Mountain trapper, the Oregon pilgrim, the "forty-niner," and the cow-boy. In our story of the West, also, we must leave many a page for the stout flood of agricultural settlement- in character differing widely from the Kentucky movement of fifty and sixty years before- that poured into the Middle West during the quarter of a century just previous to the War of Secession. New England and New York, and almost every hamlet of western and northern Europe, sent the choicest of their people. By thousands, they came to found new fortunes on

lands recently acquired by purchase from the tribesmen. Our local history is rich in stirring details of their migration, and in particulars of their privations and their hardihood. The pioneers have in the order of nature now all but left us, and we are just beginning to understand that their story is a splendid epic still waiting to be sung.

What may we not say, too, of the part our great Valleyplayed in the war for the preservation of the Union? As in the earlier days of the giant struggle between France and England for supremacy in North America, control of this vast drainage system was hotly contested. Whatever might have been the result of operations on the Atlantic Coast, the power holding the interior valley must surely in the end have won. From the population to the west of the Appalachians came the great bulk of both Northern and Southern armies; nowhere was the struggle more nearly brought home to the people. Song and story will always find abundant theme in our local annals of the war.

Equally important has been the Valley's share in the subsequent development of our nation- the social, economic, political, industrial, intellectual forces of the interior are today dominating us as a people.

I cannot close my brief and imperfect glance at some of the elements that lend to the annals of the Mississippi Valley romance, dignity, and national significance, without again appealing to

my colleagues in the field of "Western history, to look more kindly on its narrative side than has of late been the fashion. Documentary evidence is vital; wherever possible it should be the basis of every historical structure, and its presentation falls peculiarly within the province of historical societies like this without which, and the historical seminars of the great universities, I fear that history as a science would soon languish among us. Monographic dissertation is likewise essential, for the instruction of the few of light and leading who sit by the well-springs of knowledge. For well-digested, thoughtful, interpretive historical work there will, I trust, never cease to be demand among men and women of culture, although a distinguished pessimist has recently advanced the contrary view.

My present concern, however, is with the multitude, who will have none of these things, yet who surely must be taught therein before we can inculcate in them a genuine love of country. In the histories of our Valley designed for popular use, we must utilize not merely the ability to compile facts, to set them forth in orderly array, and to interpret their significance in connection with our larger national history, but with an eye keen for the picturesque we must cultivate that historical imagination which alone may irradiate and humanize the stirring records of our Past. Particularly for our schools should the histories of the West use life and action and color, if we are to remove State and local history from the ranks of unpopular studies, to make it

a thing to lure the reader on and invite him to return.

Humanity has ever been popularizing its history, that it may live in the minds of men. Folk lore is but a people's hero tales. The story-teller in the Oriental market place, the bard in Scandinavian saga and in Scottish lay, are in our time represented by the poet and the novelist who, in their own fashion, interpret our history to the people. If they be truly masters of their art, let us courteously bid them welcome to the field of Western story, for their harps alone may make our annals live.